



# LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

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## What's on your FITmas List?

While the holidays can be a joyful time of the year and offer a chance to reconnect with friends and family, they are not without their challenges that can impact physical and psychological health. Back by popular demand, Navy Suicide Prevention Branch's *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign will launch the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas to help Sailors and Navy families proactively navigate holiday stress and build resilience throughout the season and into 2017. Join us from December 14, 2016 through January 3, 2017 as we offer a daily dose of tips, tricks and small acts to help keep the happy in the holidays.

Each day will focus on navigating holiday stress related to a particular area of Total Sailor Fitness, including physical, psychological, family, behavioral, financial and spiritual fitness. We'll address navigating deployments and family separations during the holidays, simple ways to keep up with your physical training and nutrition to avoid seasonal weight gain (and guilt), facing the stress of attending large gatherings, self-care, connecting with spirituality and more. Whether you anticipate the holidays or dread them, the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas will offer practical tips to strengthen fitness from the inside out, with a seasonal spin to help you keep an even keel no matter what challenges you may face.

This 21 day journey represents the 21st Century Sailor Office's comprehensive programs to help Sailors and families make healthy decisions all year long. Each day will feature content from these programs as well as *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign partners such as the Navy Chaplain Corps, **Real Warriors Campaign**, **Guard Your Health**, **Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center**, **Human Performance Resource Center** and more. Complementary to the "1 Small ACT" message, the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas will highlight the little things that we can do as shipmates, leaders, family and community members to make a positive impact in the lives of others, beginning with our own.

You can get ready for the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas by following Navy Operational Stress Control on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress)), Twitter ([www.twitter.com/navstress](http://www.twitter.com/navstress)) and Wordpress ([navstress.wordpress.com](http://navstress.wordpress.com)), and by encouraging your friends and family to do the same. You can

also spread holiday cheer by contributing to the **1 Small ACT Photo Gallery** in three easy steps:

1. Visit <http://go.usa.gov/x8qNu> to select and print a 1 Small ACT Sign from the *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign webpage. Choose from a seasonal gratitude sign to share what you and/or your family are grateful for, or our 1 Small ACT sign to share your commitment to be there for yourself or others.
2. Personalize your sign and take a photo with you and/or your family holding it.
3. Submit your photo to [navysuicideprevention@gmail.com](mailto:navysuicideprevention@gmail.com) or upload to Facebook and tag @U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control for inclusion in the gallery on **Facebook** and **Flickr**.

FITmas time is coming – join us as we help you, your shipmates and your family unwrap new tools to stay present this season! For more information, visit the **Every Sailor, Every Day** webpage.



## Lifelink Spotlight

Staying connected to your family during deployment in the Navy can be highly challenging, emotionally draining, and stressful. This is something that Chief Petty Officer Shanna Todd came to understand very quickly.



"As great as deployments can be, it is time lost from your family," Todd said in a [related All Hands Magazine story](#). "As a father or mother, it's extremely hard especially to see the effect that it has on the children." However, during her 11 years in the Navy and numerous deployments, Todd has created small yet meaningful ways to stay connected to her husband, daughter Marissa (age 9) and son Sylar (age 2). Todd has learned how to make deployments successful for both herself and her family. So much so that she is even the pre-deployment coordinator aboard the USS Makin Island (LHD 8).

Chief Todd's perseverance allowed her to not only give 100% of her focus to a job that she loves in service to a country she loves, but lets her also stay involved in her family's day-to-day lives while overseas so that "they know she is always thinking of them." While it is hard to be separated from your children, Todd knows that they are proud of her. She exercises elements of the Principles of Resilience (Predictability, Controllability, Relationships, Trust and Meaning) by reminding herself of her purpose and *Meaning* as both a mom and a Sailor which helps her be stronger in both roles.

She fostered *Relationships* she has with her family while overseas by leaving her daughter "little notes that she finds in her lunch box at school. They're just little encouraging notes that she can read throughout the day and know [her mom is] thinking about her." And even though Todd felt like a stranger to her infant son upon returning home, she overcame this distressing obstacle by placing *Trust* in the relationship that her maternal bond would persevere. Sure enough she and her son were inseparable within just a few days.

Upon deploying this past September for the entirety of the holiday season, Todd minimized potential future stress by applying *Predictability* and buying her children presents months in advance of Christmas that she could feel good about picking out and wrapping herself. She also utilized *Controllability* by leaving a checklist for her husband, Mark, and mother-in-law, Margie with details of "all the children's events, important dates and times, and of course a comprehensive list of items which need to be purchased." Todd could both help support Mark and Margie in caring for the children while deployed and also feel connected to their daily activities.

Small yet meaningful acts like these "bridge the gap between you and your family back home," Todd offers to first time deploying Sailors. Check out more of her story [here](#).

## Plan of the Week Notes

*Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of December:*

1. Holiday sweaters can be ugly, but navigating holiday stress doesn't have to be. You can celebrate the 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas and help yourself savor the spirit of the season by checking in with @U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress)) for a daily dose of quick tips and hacks that fit into you and your family's hectic holiday schedule. What's on your FITmas list?
2. The average DUI costs \$10,000. Keep the holidays merry, meaningful and in your budget by giving the gift of a designated driver (DD) this season. Start by taking the pledge to be a DD here: [go.usa.gov/x8UUN](http://go.usa.gov/x8UUN). Then head to the *Keep What You've Earned* campaign's Designated Driver page on [www.nadap.navy.mil](http://www.nadap.navy.mil) for printable gift cards that you can give during the holidays, redeemable for a safe ride with you as the DD.
3. Need to talk to someone who's been there? Reach out to the new Be There Peer Support Call and Outreach Center today to speak with a peer counselor who can help you talk through any of life's challenges, find solutions and connect you with resources. From sleep troubles, to relationship and family concerns, substance abuse or everyday stress, you have someone to turn to who can help. Dial 1-844-357-PEER (7337), text 480-360-6188 or visit [www.betherepeersupport.com](http://www.betherepeersupport.com).
4. Not heading home for the holidays this year? You can still enjoy the spirit of the season through camaraderie with your shipmates, participating in local festivities and maintaining connections with loved ones. With a little effort, you can establish new traditions like enjoying a holiday book "together" with your children. Choose to read the same book over a few weeks and reflect on each section via email or other communication. If you have the bandwidth, send a video of you reading a short passage. Get creative to stay connected this season!

## Bravo Zulu US Naval Hospital Okinawa!

Congratulations to US Naval Hospital Okinawa for earning **recognition** from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office for their exceptional efforts during 2016 Suicide Prevention Month! Navy Suicide Prevention Branch would like to extend our gratitude to all who submitted for DoD recognition and to all Sailors, families and members of the Navy community who continue to be there for *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

## News and Resources

### Give the Gift of a Designated Driver

[All Hands Magazine](#)

### Easing Holiday and Reintegration Stress

[Real Warriors](#)

### New Peer-Support Service Launches

[Defense.gov](#)

### Suicide Prevention: Strengthening Our Navy Team Together

[NavyLive](#)

### Tis the Season: Connect with Family

[HPRC](#)

### It's Not Too Late to Celebrate Friendsgiving

[NavyNavStress](#)

### The Importance of Slowing Down this Holiday Season

[Navy Chaplain Corps](#)

### Embracing Change

[All Hands Magazine](#)

### 5 Tips for Caregivers

[Real Warriors](#)

### Commanding Officer's Suicide Prevention Program Handbook

[Issuu](#)

## Current and Upcoming Events

### Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day December 7

### US National Guard Birthday December 13

### 21 Days of Total Sailor FITmas December 14, 2016 - January 3, 2017

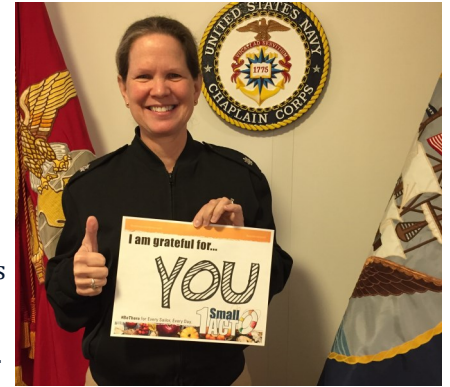
Like us on Facebook  
([www.facebook.com/navstress](http://www.facebook.com/navstress)) for more details

### SPC Training Webinars December 13, 1200 CT January 11, 1400 CT [Register here](#)

## A Chaplain's Case for Gratitude

By Cmdr. Kim Donahue, CHC, USN, Director for Force Structure for the Navy Chief of Chaplains Office

Thankfulness and gratitude are powerful aspects of life. Still, sometimes circumstances make it hard to look around and be thankful. How does light get in during times like that? As a Navy chaplain, I too have days where I find myself battling such heaviness and challenges. For me, it's a matter of seeking perspective, finding meaning and connecting to purpose. Sometimes that comes from my reaching out to another to allow them to shine a ray of light into my darkened view. Sometimes it is someone reaching out to me for help, or just to say thanks.



There are times when a small ray of light is all we need to break the darkness. With that light, I am reminded that when we go through things alone we can become convinced that they will not get better, but when we have someone by our side we can find strength to move forward. With that small glimmer of light, I am reminded of my purpose. Even a small word of thanks from one person to another can make all the difference.

Gratitude can be a source of hope when we are most vulnerable. I will never forget a time when I was preparing to say goodbye to another group of wounded warriors who had come for several weeks to the National Intrepid Center of Excellence. As a chaplain, part of my role was to create a parting ritual. Knowing that this was a vulnerable time, after making connections and beginning some healing, I wanted the ritual to give each person an opportunity to honestly own the challenges and fears ahead, and to say thank you for the little rays of light that they received through the work of the dedicated team of providers. Once again, I was reminded of the reciprocal benefits of being *with* others through their journey.

Three of the guys—each uniquely challenged who all shared the same experience as the pivotal moment in their healing—decided to take the risk to travel on the metro to the Vietnam Memorial Wall. They “just had to do it,” they said. For one, it meant facing an absolute aversion to going in confined spaces with lots of people. For another, it meant being in wide open spaces with no security, and likely talking to others. It probably meant that they would have to walk a bit farther than the third of the trio had walked in a very long time. But together they decided that they owed it to each other and those who had gone before them to do this, and get each other through it. They decided to be with each other on a journey that was uniquely theirs as individuals yet shared between them at the same time.

You can imagine the team as they set out and then finally reached the wall. That was celebration enough. But what life had in store for them, they could not have anticipated. They each described in their own way how when they finally arrived, they spotted a woman standing at the wall in tears and they all felt drawn to her. The outgoing one of the bunch walked over and approached the woman. The others followed. They all heard her describe how her husband had been killed in Vietnam. This was the first time she had made it to the wall. All she wanted to do was to do a rubbing of his name, but it was too high up and she just couldn't reach it. She was desperate and alone.

“Don't worry ma'am,” they said. “We got this!” With that they leveraged their collective height to get to her husband's name so that she could do the rubbing. With mission accomplished, they were met with grateful hugs. And they quietly walked away.

The three men shared this story with the group of providers and reflected almost with one voice: “We knew from that time on that there was a purpose for our lives. There is still something we can do.” They drew strength from each other. And they found gratitude; gratitude from others and gratitude for still being able to give a little light or a tiny ember.

Don't just be there for others, be *with* them to light their path and watch as they light yours. Connect with gratitude. Your perspective of your purpose may be renewed beyond your wildest imaginings. Your moment to make a difference may be just around the corner.